

Commandant's Guidance





Our Marine Corps traditions connect us to a proud legacy of past achievements and serve as a bridge to future success. In order to meet the challenge and promise of the future, Marines must possess a thorough understanding of the goals, values, and institutional objectives of our Corps. Just as the use of “commander’s intent” has revolutionized the way commanders communicate their goals and objectives, this document should be viewed as the “Commandant’s intent” for the next four years. It is directed to all Marines, civilian Marines, and our Marine families, and it provides broad guidance concerning the direction of the Marine Corps.

In 1995, our 31st Commandant, General Charles C. Krulak, published his “Commandant’s Planning Guidance,” which was of great benefit to us all. Widely read, it was effective in explaining his expectations and the way ahead for the institution. Indeed, General Krulak’s focus on “Making Marines” and “Winning Battles” will mark his legacy, forever shaping the way future generations of Marines perceive their role.

General Krulak’s achievements have been many, with consistent progress in areas critical to the Corps, such as his focus on ethical standards and the welfare of the Marine family. Further, he established the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab and our Advanced Warfighting Experiments, implemented the “Crucible” for all Marines, influenced the tremendous record of excellence achieved by our recruiting force, enhanced the operational competence of Marines on the global stage, and sustained the high regard for the Marine Corps held by the citizens of this Nation and by their elected representatives. At the same time, Mrs. Krulak contributed immeasurably to the vitality of the Corps through her tireless efforts on behalf of Marines and their families. Among the first to recognize that personal and family readiness are inseparable from combat readiness, she generously focused attention on issues affecting quality of life, enriching the Marine Corps experience for us all. We are grateful to General and Mrs. Krulak for their leadership and devotion to our Corps. Looking back, the past four years have indeed been a fine time to be a Marine.

This document—the “Commandant’s Guidance”—explains my philosophical perspective, derived from the privilege of having been a Marine for parts of the last four decades. In my experience, I have found it useful to understand the philosophy of the leaders with whom it has been my honor to serve. Such comprehension always led to a deeper and clearer connection to the mission and the path towards its accomplishment. By gaining an appreciation of my “Corps values,” my intent is that the reader will be able to understand and gather insight into our future together. While this document is largely philosophical, specific implementation plans and programs will be announced in the near future.

The United States Marine: A Special Breed

"Now this is the Law of the Jungle—as old and as true as the sky;
And the Wolf that shall keep it may prosper, but the Wolf that shall break it must die.

As the creeper that girdles the tree-trunk the Law runneth forward and back—
For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack."

—Rudyard Kipling, *Second Jungle Book*

Kipling's passage should resonate powerfully with us because it succinctly captures the relationship between a Marine and the Corps. Illustrating the synergy present in a closely-knit group, it reflects the strength an individual can derive from the group. Kipling's "wolf" is an apt metaphor for the individual Marine warrior, while the "pack" can represent the Corps itself. The poem conveys an important message about the essence of our existence, which becomes even clearer when one changes the final stanza to: "For the strength of the Corps is the Marine, and the strength of the Marine is the Corps."

At the heart of Marine philosophy is an appreciation of *what it means to be a Marine*. As Marines, we have a powerful sense of service and commitment—a desire to make a difference. This sense of service elevates and dignifies our lives; it is the intangible reward for the sacrifices inherent in the Marine Corps way of life. We accept that our first priority is mission accomplishment; we value the individual as the strength of the institution; we hold as one of our cornerstones *taking care of Marines*. This sense of service enriches us.

One of the joys of being a Marine is that we continually draw upon our history and actively celebrate the richness of our traditions. The simplicity of our lifelong title—"Marine"—brings forth association with our past and our present, as well as the promise of our future. This stream of history extending from yesterday to tomorrow is a story of both change and consistency, all centered on fulfilling our duty to the Nation.

Today's Marines are distinguished by the accomplishments of those who have worn the uniform before us. Our predecessors have aptly demonstrated the qualities that historically characterized Marines: honor, courage, and commitment. These attributes are integral to our belief in the Corps and ourselves. They mark the way in which the Nation perceives us.

Building upon our Corps' past achievements, we are defined by a desire to serve our country. All Marines are involved in the evolution of that defini-



tion. The term "all Marines" means active, reserve, retired, and veteran Marines; the Sailors and the 18,000 civilians who serve with us; and our family members. We are one Corps, in which all Marines participate in determining who we are, what we do, and the principles for which we stand.

Marines always try to do the right thing. This is an easy sentence to understand, but its implications are profound. It describes the Marine way, affecting all that we do in our personal and professional lives, driving the way our units interact, and influencing the way Marines relate to one another in our daily activities. It means that we believe in one another and that we give other Marines the benefit of the doubt.

Implicit in this philosophy is the conviction that we do not always need regulations that "spell it out" for us in agonizing detail. If we believe that Marines try to do the right thing, it follows that our policies and directives should reflect that conviction. Just as we trust one another instinctively in combat, so too can we enjoy the same confidence in our daily lives.

Leadership is the heart of our institutional character. It is the most important bond between Marines and is the basis for the Corps' achievements in peace and in war. Of the many skills and abilities we use in our profession, there is none we prize more highly. We develop the leadership skills of our Marines, starting when they join our ranks as recruits and officer candidates, and continuing throughout their careers. From my own experience, I especially value four leadership concepts: *trust, tolerance, unit before self, and saying "yes" to our Marines' requests.*

Trust is built upon mutual respect and confidence, enabling mission accomplishment under the difficult circumstances that are a part of the profession of arms. When trust does not exist, we tend to focus on self-protection, stifling creativity, aggressiveness, and willingness to take risks—all attributes necessary for success in combat. Combat success requires a "play to win" attitude. Lack of trust moves us towards a "playing not to lose" temperament, creating a tendency to settle for mediocrity, a notion foreign to our Marine culture. *Marines trust one another.* A combat veteran once said, "The great thing about being a Marine is that when you stand up to move forward in the attack, you know that the Marines on your left and right are going to stand up, too." This unquestioned confidence in our fellow Marines is at the root of our cohesion; it is what bonds us for life.

Tolerance for mistakes unleashes creativity and initiative. As Marines, we are imperfect people living and working in an institution that strives for perfection. That we sometimes make mistakes is to be expected. Leadership at all levels determines how we address those mistakes. Tolerance contributes to our warfighting skills by encouraging us to accept prudent risks, a fundamental tenet of our maneuver warfare philosophy. When we are confident that we will not be held to an impossibly high standard, the process of trial and error will enhance the learning process and will encourage us to act with the boldness that should be our hallmark. Mistakes are not always indicative of future performance. As we mature and grow with experience, we benefit from the lessons of the past. Leadership tempered with tolerance can keep career aspirations alive for those who take more time to find their stride. There is an adage that says, "The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor the man perfected without trials." Our way of life will certainly provide the friction and the trials; our role is to use these tools to improve ourselves and our Corps.

Throughout our history, the idea of *unit before self* has inspired Marines to sacrifice their personal comfort,



safety, and even their very lives for the mission and their fellow Marines. The Navy's reference to "Ship-Ship-mates-Self" illustrates our priorities. In combat and in garrison, Marines traditionally think in terms of "we" rather than "I," focusing on the success of the group rather than the individual. The simple elegance of our uniform visibly illustrates this philosophy with its design that identifies us, first and foremost, as Marines. This team-oriented attitude has been a powerful source of strength for the Corps. The ability to instill in our units this spirit of selflessness is a defining attribute of top-quality leadership.

Saying "yes" to our Marines' requests, whenever possible, is part of good leadership. We demand a great deal from our Marines and they respond magnificently. In return, the Corps should strive to help them fulfill their needs and aspirations. When a Marine asks for something, and it is a sensible request, we should do everything in our power to provide it. This is particularly important in the day-to-day garrison environment in which Marines and their families interact with the supporting establishment: the personnel system, our health care providers, family housing offices, and others. In many areas, bureaucratic inertia can overwhelm good intentions; the result can be unnecessary frustration, stress, and disappointment for Marines and their family members. When we focus on how we can say "yes" to our Marines, they can concentrate on mission accomplishment, because they will be confident that the Corps' first instinct is to work for their benefit. Their families will share this sense of satisfaction and will contribute to mission accomplishment by being supportive of our calling and our way of life. While we cannot oblige every request, our first reaction should be to ask, "How can we support this Marine?" When we must refuse a request, we will show respect for our Marines by explaining *why*.



Leadership drives the process of “Making Marines.” To answer when the Nation calls, we need Marines, educated in the ways of our Corps, who are trained and ready to perform their assigned roles and missions. We fulfill this requirement through our Transformation Process, which includes five phases: recruiting, recruit training, follow-on training, cohesion, and sustainment. It is a continuous process involving critical actions, decisions, and most important, leadership, from recruiting through service in the operating forces and beyond.

Recruiting provides the lifeblood of the Marine Corps. Our recruiters are engaged in a daily battle. Working long hours under demanding conditions, they faithfully bring us the best recruits our country has to offer. Their efforts have been so successful that we have exceeded accession goals for the past four years. Recruiters accomplish the first critical step in the process of “Making Marines” by selecting the young Americans we send to our Recruit Depots. They have our trust in this difficult and vital mission. We must sustain their efforts by considering the recruiting force a “supported command.” Commanders throughout the Corps reinforce the effort by providing selfless support to recruiter screening teams and by assigning young Marines to recruiter assistance duty. Our manpower system lends its indispensable aid by ensuring qualified Marines have the opportunity to serve as recruiters. The Corps, as an institution, supports by recognizing and rewarding the efforts of our successful recruiters.

Recruit training—the essential element of the Transformation Process that produces our basically trained Marines—is an unqualified success. When we lead the young men and women of America through recruit training and forge them into Marines, we change their lives forever, for they adopt our high standards and our core values. Many generations of Marines have undergone this conversion; it is a tried-and-true process that has served us well. The addition of the “Crucible” further strengthened recruit training and the Transforma-

tion Process. Our Drill Instructors carry out the critical recruit training mission. These mentors form a recruit’s first impression of the Corps, an impression that all Marines remember for the rest of their lives. Duty on the drill field is an enormous leadership responsibility and, like most highly rewarding assignments, it is extraordinarily demanding. Our DIs perform superbly in this important mission, earning our respect, appreciation, and support for their contribution to the Corps.

Follow-on training is an indispensable part of Making Marines—so indispensable and so important that I think of it as a separate phase of the Transformation Process.

Building upon the foundation established by our recruit training, Marine Combat Training makes “every Marine a rifleman.” Other follow-on training provides Marines the skills to perform in their primary military occupational specialties. The Marines we assign to instructor duty play an important role, bearing responsibility for strengthening cohesion and sustaining the transformation. The leadership they provide for new Marines demonstrates our commitment to professionalism and nurtures the pride in being a Marine that is sown in our entry-level training programs. The investment we make in our MOS qualifying schools pays dividends in the form of trained and motivated Marines, ready to succeed in their first duty assignments. We will continue to support our schools and the Marines assigned to instructor duty. Similarly, we will carefully manage follow-on training by minimizing the time our new Marines spend in the training pipeline and strengthening unity of effort among the various organizations that participate in the training process.

Our educational institutions are an essential element of follow-on training. During the educational process, Marines experience personal and professional growth that not only enhances their value to the Corps, but also increases their self-worth and productivity. We will extend these opportunities to all Marines by capitalizing on advances in technology and the quality of our courses to increase the span of our professional military education system. With the recent changes to our distance learning programs, for example, we are reaching an ever-growing population, to the great benefit of the Corps. We will continue to build upon our success in this area, endeavoring to provide the advantages of professional military education to the greatest possible number of Marines throughout their careers. Further, we will continue to emphasize the role of professional military education—be it resident or distance learning—in our promotion process.

Cohesion, the sense of belonging that recruits discover within their platoons and squads, is a great motivator

and is something Marines expect to experience throughout their time in the Corps. They are right to expect this. The manner in which units receive and assimilate new Marines sets the tone for all that comes later. Leaders at all levels, from senior commanders to corporals, should aim to instill this sense of belonging, which we value highly. All Marines, regardless of their time in the Corps or their time in a unit, should understand that they are full-fledged members of the team. We accomplish this by demonstrating to them that we value not only their lives, safety, and physical well-being, but also their professional competence and their opinions. Our newest Marines fresh from recruit training have just as much passion for the Corps as the “old salts” who measure their service in decades. Leaders should harness this passion and use it to build the cohesion that makes us strong.

Along those same lines, remember that our *entry-level programs—recruit training and our commissioning programs—are the only “rites of passage” recognized by our Corps. Young Americans enter Parris Island, San Diego, and Quantico as civilians and leave as Marines. In earning our title, they immediately and forever become members of the United States Marine Corps, imbued with our core values and deserving of our respect. Once a Marine, always a Marine. Our emblem—the Eagle, Globe and Anchor—says it all.*

Sustainment, the final step in the Transformation Process, is a continuous evolution through which leaders strengthen core values, cohesion, and the sense of mission and service that are the dominant characteristics of Marines. This phase of the Transformation Process is currently the least developed and we need to focus attention on how best to accomplish it. For example, we should em-



phasize the role of our senior Marines—active, reserve, and retired—as mentors, enabling them to share their wisdom and experience with the junior generation of Marines.

We make a significant investment in our Marines; we need to keep the best of them. Every year, we return approximately 40,000 Marines to civilian society as first-class citizens. In most cases, they are either retiring after long and successful careers, or are being discharged at the completion of their obligated service. For those in the latter category, retention in the Corps—either through reenlistment, extension, or service in the Marine Corps Reserve—can be an option. The energy our commanders and career planners expend in this area is invaluable, because every trained and qualified Marine who remains on duty strengthens the Corps. Remember: replacing a corporal with four years’ experience takes four years! Through leadership, command attention, and the use of incentives, we can continue to retain those Marines necessary to keep our Corps strong and ready.

For those who choose to leave active duty, we can provide assistance in the transition to civilian life, while reemphasizing the value of an honorable discharge. For example, providing letters of recommendation for those separating honorably can help them to obtain suitable employment or gain admission to educational programs that will enhance their lives after the Corps. This will reflect our commitment to our Marines and reinforce the fact that an honorable discharge is both a sign of dedication to the prosperity of our Nation and a measure of personal character. Marines who leave active service with an honorable discharge are equipped to be responsible citizens with an unlimited future.





Before separating Marines prior to the completion of their enlistments, we must ensure that we have provided them all possible assistance to resolve their retention concerns. Each year, we separate the equivalent of *more than two infantry regiments of Marines* before the expiration of their active duty commitment. This is wasteful—a term not normally associated with our Corps—and we must focus on ways to reduce it. This is also a major leadership responsibility, and we will take measures to meet the challenge. When dealing with a Marine whose ability to complete a term of enlistment is in doubt, we should apply a foundational tenet that is ingrained in our culture: *a Marine in trouble is never abandoned*. As leaders, we are obligated to seek solutions and options to provide our Marines the framework for success. This form of mentoring builds cohesion by demonstrating the value the Corps places on each individual Marine. This is not to suggest that we should avoid discharging Marines early when it is warranted—I understand that we cannot fix every problem. We should ensure, however, that we have applied all of our leadership skills to help our Marines succeed. By experiencing their leaders' personal concern, Marines develop a sense of belonging and an understanding of their personal responsibility to the unit. They become "shareholders," with a stake in the unit's success.

As many good ideas come from the bottom up, as come from the top down. We must create an environment in which Marines consider this philosophy a part of Marine life. In the past we relied excessively on top-to-bottom instruction, the old "if the Marine Corps wanted you to . . . they would have . . ." way of life. We cannot continue to operate with that mindset. We must emphasize mission-type orders that are clear with regard to intent and guidance, but stop short of telling Marines exactly "how" to accomplish the mission, step by excruciating step. In this context, *"ownership" of the Corps is not a function of "time in."*

Marine families are members of the Marine team, and their support is essential to the health of the

Corps. Because forty-five percent of our Marines are married, families are a large part of our Corps. Our way of life can often place strain on families, many of which are very young. When they suffer, our readiness is adversely affected, making this a leadership concern of the highest magnitude. We need to maintain, indeed *enhance*, the support of our families for our way of life. This is a battle we can and must win. We value their contributions, recognizing that their support serves to enrich our lives in garrison and is a powerful combat multiplier in time of war. In return, they must know that we will care for them to the best of our ability, and that we

will treat them with dignity and understanding.

We should celebrate and appreciate the efforts of Marine family members who are able to devote spare time and energy to our base communities through volunteerism. Similarly, we understand that not everyone has this opportunity and we should not exert pressure—real or implied—to increase participation in these activities. *Volunteerism is to be voluntary*. When needs cannot be met by volunteers, we should provide resources to fund appropriate positions.

We will work to further strengthen the role of Marine spouses in our Corps. In many cases, spouses are the "duty experts" on issues affecting family life in the Corps. We should ensure that they have ample opportunities to share their wisdom, experience, and concerns so that we can capture their valuable ideas. Our family support programs already provide some of this interaction, but we can improve upon these efforts. It is critical to the integrity of these initiatives that our performance matches our rhetoric. We demonstrate our commitment by taking timely and appropriate action on the thoughtful recommendations of Marine spouses. I would ask all Marines to join me in eliminating the term "dependent" in referring to our family members.

Finally, to the best of our ability, we should recognize that stability is a means of reducing family stress. We must acknowledge that the world has changed in ways that cause Marine families to seek increased stability. In many instances, both spouses work in order to achieve personal goals and financial security. Frequent moves can make it difficult for a spouse to find and maintain employment. When children of Marines are required to change schools repeatedly, they can suffer academically and socially. In many cases, our Marines manage these challenges by accepting "geographical bachelor" status, which introduces yet another form of stress to the family. We should work to avoid placing Marines in situations that require such decisions. By increasing opportunities for stability, we signal our resolve to improve the lifestyle of our Marines.

Maintaining Operational Excellence

“Winning Battles” is our fundamental purpose and our reason for being. For 223 years we have faced our adversaries across the spectrum of conflict “in ev’ry clime and place,” and we have prevailed time and again. This is what America expects of its Marine Corps, and it is what we will continue to deliver. Our record of victory stands upon our commitment to combat readiness, a warrior culture, and an expeditionary mindset. We will continue to build upon this foundation by doing those things that have served us well in the past, while exploring opportunities to enhance our future capabilities.



The operating forces are our focus of effort. As the source of the combat-ready MAGTFs that are our unique contribution to the defense of the Nation, the operating forces are the soul of the Corps. Through them, we pursue our primary mission as an institution: *readiness for operations across the spectrum of conflict*. To accomplish this mission, we must work to provide our units the resources they require in order to train, maintain equipment, deploy, and if necessary, fight. Accordingly, we will promote the continued operational excellence of our units by addressing those issues that influence readiness, such as manning and funding. *The operating forces will not be the “bill-payer” for other requirements!* We need to protect them from becoming overextended.

Service in the operating forces is the experience that characterizes us as warriors. All Marines seek it because it is challenging—it tests us. At the same time, we appreciate its many rewards. Marines join our Corps to serve with the operating forces, and we should strive to increase their opportunities to do so.

Finally, remember that all Marines belong to the same team. By reaffirming the primacy of the operating forces, we do not minimize the contributions of Marines serving at supporting headquarters, bases and stations, or in the training establishment. Just as artillery firing in support of infantry plays a critical role in accomplishing the overall mission, each Marine is an important participant in achieving our objectives as a Corps. We should recognize and appreciate the value of their contributions to reaching our institutional goals.

Our enduring partnership with the Navy is our primary institutional center of gravity. The Navy is our stalwart partner in littoral power projection, providing capabilities that complement, support, and sustain MAGTF expeditionary striking power. Without

the Navy, we would not be able to accomplish our mission. In both the operating forces and the supporting establishment, Marines and Sailors work side-by-side, drawing upon the synergy of the Navy-Marine Corps Team as a powerful source of strength for the Naval Services. To continue the teamwork that has characterized the contributions of our Naval Services to the common defense, the Marine Corps and the Navy, together, must address unresolved issues in order to proceed on course with a unified strategic vision.

We will continually explore ways of strengthening the bonds in the Navy-Marine Corps Team in order to increase our understanding of each other’s direction and goals. There are many possibilities. As one example, we can consider initiatives that expand cross-staffing billets in Navy and Marine Corps units. Such exchange programs afford Marines and Sailors the opportunity to learn about and experience the difficulties that their counterparts face. Similarly, we can explore the manner in which we prioritize the allocation of resources to ensure that the concerns of both Services are addressed and that our budgeting process provides the best approach to building and maintaining critical capabilities. Through these types of deep-rooted integration measures, the Navy-Marine Corps Team will be better positioned to serve our Nation as we face the uncertain environment ahead.

All Marines, particularly those who work most closely with our Navy shipmates, must cultivate our strong traditional relationship while embracing new ideas that will benefit both Services. As the Navy and Marine Corps adopt new operational concepts, we should enthusiastically pursue opportunities to improve both administrative and operational interaction between our two Services. Over the next two decades, for example, our efforts to implement the vision of the future described in *Operational Maneuver From the Sea* will highlight the opportunities created



by a strong Navy-Marine Corps Team. This is fertile ground for innovative thought. We will work with the Navy in thinking about current and future requirements for littoral power projection, focusing on ways to further enhance the overall utility of Naval forces. This effort will require Marines and Sailors to reevaluate existing systems, programs, and processes, and it will almost certainly highlight a need for change in some areas. While the doctrinal, procedural, and systemic forms of the Navy-Marine Corps alliance can and should evolve, the substance of the relationship will remain true to the traditional sense of teamwork that has served us well throughout our long history together.

The Marine Air-Ground Task Force is both our legacy and the foundation for our future success. Tested and proven in contingencies that span the spectrum from humanitarian assistance to combat, the MAGTF is our operational trademark, having served as our organizational framework for employing Marine forces for the last 50 years. MAGTFs join with Amphibious Ready Groups, Carrier Battle Groups, and Maritime Prepositioning Forces to form a cohesive and cost effective naval power projection capability—the Navy-Marine Corps Team.

Our willingness to embrace change is one of the Corps' great strengths. As we pursue new ideas to stay abreast of fast-changing military innovation, MAGTFs remain the bedrock of our organization for combat. Nevertheless, new concepts require us to reconsider the manner in which we form and employ them. As we evolve to meet the challenges of the 21st century, we must explore new possibilities for the MAGTF's progressive adaptation to future realities. Recently, for example, Force Structure Planning Group-99 recommended intermediate goals, which will help guide our ongoing process of change. Periodically, we will continue to form specially focused groups to assess our direction.

Operational Maneuver From the Sea—our capstone concept—introduces a blueprint for an enhanced capability and suggests a need to examine our current warfighting structure. There are many possibilities to consider. First, we will explore ways in which we might reshape our MAGTFs to increase their combat power, operational versatility, utility, and deployability. Concurrent with our focus on the future, we must develop intermediate initiatives within the framework of existing technologies to ensure that our current capabilities remain relevant. This will shorten the “bridge” to the next generation.

Second, we will study our MAGTF training programs to determine whether we are preparing for the right number and type of missions. The pre-deployment certification procedure we currently use for our Marine Expeditionary Units (Special Operations Capable) has been highly successful. We will ensure its continued relevance by validating the utility of our designated mission profiles, adding new requirements, and eliminating those that may have become outdated, as necessary. Additionally, we should build upon the success of the current process by expanding its scope to include, for example, a certification procedure for units tasked to conduct Maritime Prepositioning Force operations.

Finally, we should ensure that our MAGTFs are sized correctly to accomplish a wide range of contingency missions. We should think beyond routine MEU (SOC) forward deployment operations to other, larger requirements. We must be prepared to deploy units of varying scale—small, mid-sized, or large—using a variety of means: aboard amphibious shipping, as Maritime Prepositioning Forces, by strategic airlift, or through a combination of these methods. The MAGTF provides us the flexibility to plan for and execute these options by creating appropriately sized forces, tailored for the situation and mission. We should exploit this flexibility, ensuring that we are using all of the available tools, and that they are well understood in the joint arena.

Just as the concept of trust should be important in our personal and professional relationships, it is also essential to the successful functioning of the MAGTF. In order for MAGTFs to be agile, expeditionary, and effective combined arms teams, each element must focus on its respective core competency. We must organize and operate in such a way that commanders have absolute confidence that required support will be provided when and where it is needed. This unquestioning confidence must be the defining feature of the relationship between the Command El-

ement, Ground Combat Element, Aviation Combat Element, and Combat Service Support Element. Trust helps to strengthen this relationship by enabling us to exploit the power of horizontal information flow, speeding our decision cycle and facilitating execution at lower levels. In maneuver warfare terms, trust will be an essential part of the way we organize, train, and equip our units for future conflicts. Central to our warfighting culture is the notion that the power of the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Trust is the bond that produces this cohesion.



Marines must continually study and think about the functions and interactions of all elements of the MAGTF. Just as we become experts in our respective military occupational specialties, so must we all dedicate ourselves to maintaining our expertise in the ways of the MAGTF. We should consider ourselves “MAGTF Marines” first, specialists second. We should live the MAGTF lifestyle, from our fighting holes to our headquarters. By enhancing our individual understanding of the overall concept and the roles of our fellow Marines, we will deepen the trust that gives the MAGTF its strength. In Kipling parlance, the “pack” will be more effective.

We must train the way we fight. Although this concept has been around for a long time, the reality is that too often we do not “train smart.” By “training smart,” I mean using simulation when and where it makes sense, maximizing the value of training opportunities, and minimizing operations tempo to increase readiness. Regrettably, it appears that we often conduct training as we do because “that is the way it has always been done.” We cannot afford to continue in this manner. Instead, we must focus on achieving the greatest return on our training investment.

Training is a two-part process. First, Marines must master fundamental skills and knowledge by focusing on essential principles to achieve basic competence. At this level of training, we frequently use checklists and objective evaluations. At the more advanced level of the training process, we must provide Marines the opportunity to apply their knowledge, skills, and most importantly, their *wits*, in an environment that replicates the fog and friction of combat.

The application phase of the process—*learning the operational art*—must be as realistic and challenging as practicable, accurately portraying the essence of combat. Exercise design is critical. Training scenarios must pit Marines and their commanders against skilled and determined adversaries who fight to win.

We must continually test ourselves in difficult situations. For example, Marines should train for operations in environments marked by rapidly changing tactical conditions. Similarly, commanders and staffs conducting force-on-force training exercises should have access to only the knowledge and understanding of the enemy situation that they can develop through the actual employment of intelligence assets. We can no longer afford to “simulate” essential elements of information; we need to trust intelligence to drive operations.

Technology can help us to achieve realism in training. Simulation systems, such as MILES equipment and limited effects munitions, can be invaluable in providing Marines immediate, realistic “feedback” that enhances the value of force-on-force training. We need to expand our current capability to employ these tools to ensure that we possess the right training aids, in the right quantities, and that we understand how best to train with them. Further, we will facilitate training with these systems by streamlining procedures to limit the administrative “overhead” associated with their use.

The primary criteria for evaluating tactical execution in training exercises should be subjective, based upon the informed judgment of experienced Marines/monitors, especially commanders. Checklists are best reserved for use in initial training phases, as Marines learn fundamental skills. At the “operational art” level, where we must apply these skills in realistic, unscripted scenarios that require Marines to outthink and outfight determined human opponents, the standards for measuring success are different.

Our training must provide a true learning environment, in which we recognize that Marines striving for excellence will make tactical mistakes from time to time. If we treat these mistakes as learning opportunities, the lessons will not be forgotten. Without question, the most important part of any exercise is the cri-

tique, yet it is frequently the first to be sacrificed or reduced due to lack of time or competing priorities. Critique sessions should be a positive means of providing meaningful feedback aimed at helping our units to improve. Skilled, confident commanders will allow, indeed encourage, free and spirited discussion among exercise participants and monitors.

Inspections should focus on operational readiness. Just as the idea of trust permeates our tactics and our lives as Marines, it follows that we should apply this concept to our inspection policies and philosophy. We have great units and our inspection criteria should be aimed at showing how good they are and helping them to become even better. Inspections have historically been the ultimate report card for commanders. That era is over. We are concerned about operational readiness through the “life cycle” of our units. Accordingly, announced inspections should cease immediately, to the greatest degree possible. Instead, they should become no-notice operational readiness inspections that provide a candid—and thereby more accurate—assessment of a unit’s performance, and also eliminate tedious inspection preparations that are costly in time and effort. Our measures of effectiveness must be reasonable and meaningful. In the operating forces, for instance, an inspection might include, among other things, a no-notice field exercise. In all cases, we should tailor our inspection procedures and criteria to fit the circumstances. The guiding question for inspections should be: *“Is this unit’s readiness at the level we should expect, given the present stage of its life cycle?”*

We can increase the utility of our inspection process by using it as a means of sharing ideas. By providing commanders visibility of inspection results and the average performance of other units, we can provide all units important information with regard to “what works and what doesn’t.” This exchange of information, made possible by our environment of *trust*, will allow us to “raise the collective average,” improving performance across the board.

Our bases and stations are the “fifth element” of the MAGTF. They play two critical roles in the lives of our Marines. First, they provide the means by which we develop, train, and maintain a modern force that is prepared to win our Nation’s battles. Installations are the “platforms” from which we project expeditionary power by deploying and sustaining MAGTFs. They will continue to grow in importance as we fully implement our future doctrine and the “reachback” requirement it demands.

Second, installations support the quality of life of our Marines and their families. Our continued commitment to bachelor and family housing and other base facilities will pay great dividends in morale and retention. We do not just reenlist individual Marines—we reenlist families. In order to retain our best Marines, we must provide them a quality environment in which to live. We have made great strides in providing modern and comfortable barracks and family housing to both single and married personnel. I want to increase the momentum on this effort.

We cannot continue to mortgage the future of our bases and stations and still expect to develop, train, and maintain a modern force that is prepared to win our Nation’s battles. Without installations, there is no readiness. Modernization of training support resources must keep pace with the improved capabilities of the operating forces. We must develop a long-range infrastructure management plan for construction, repair, and continuous maintenance of ranges and other training support facilities, consistent with the development and fielding of new technologies, equipment, and warfighting concepts. In an environment of finite resources, we must prioritize our efforts by focusing on the installations that have the greatest impact on supporting our MAGTFs. Facilities personnel must have a voice as we develop new warfighting capabilities so they can assess the long-term impact on these critical assets. We must also take full advantage of outsourcing and privatization of functions that contractors can sometimes perform less expensively than federal employees and active duty personnel. We need to look at those functions that Marines perform in the supporting establishment and ask ourselves how many of those functions can be outsourced. My goal is to return as many of our Marines as possible to the operating forces.



Contributing to the Common Defense

Current trends suggest that future crises will require our participation across the full spectrum of operations—from humanitarian assistance, to peacekeeping, to combat. We face a wide range of potential adversaries: familiar ones, like regional aggressors, as well as new threats, like non-state actors and criminal networks. Our mission is to be prepared at all times to face and defeat the enemies of our Nation, whenever and wherever they might appear. To accomplish this we must have balanced, highly trained combined arms teams that can operate with agility and strength across the spectrum of conflict.

Combat-ready MAGTFs are our unique contribution to the common defense. For more than two centuries the Marine Corps has filled a unique niche in the Nation's defense posture. Our naval character and expeditionary nature provide us access to any coastal country, without violating borders or requiring land-based logistical support. Our ability to rapidly embark, deploy, and employ our MAGTFs is not duplicated by any other military asset in the Nation's arsenal. Since expeditionary readiness is one of our core competencies, we must stand ready to respond to crises anytime, anywhere.

The MAGTF is the ideal instrument with which to meet the challenges of an uncertain future. Its strength lies in its composition, which we can tailor to confront any threat and handle any contingency. As a force that is "small enough to get there, yet strong enough to win," the MAGTF is a vital part of our equation for success on any battlefield. It contributes to the common defense by effectively projecting power and deterring aggression. Since regional instability has supplanted major threats to world peace—at least for the time being—the effectiveness of our Naval forces in maintaining a strong overseas presence and projecting power has been instrumental in preserving that stability. Central to this capability is the flexibility and lethality of the MAGTF. We will continue to enhance its tactical capabilities, for it is the organization that allows us to serve the Nation in ways that are both affordable and unique.

We are full partners in joint and combined operations. MAGTFs provide unique capabilities in concert with other Services and coalition partners. As a result, theater commanders-in-chief and other joint force commanders welcome Marine Corps participation in exercises, forward presence, and contingencies. We will build upon this reputation as a valued force in joint and combined operations by cementing our relationships with unified commanders. In this vein, Marines must aggressively seek opportunities to explain the MAGTF's unique capabilities to our sister



Services and within the joint arena. Every Marine officer who embarks upon a joint duty assignment must be a well-schooled ambassador of our Corps.

To enhance our relevance, we must address—from a joint warfighting perspective—such issues as logistics, communications links, intelligence access and dissemination, joint air assets, and command and control. We must work closely with our coalition partners in order to help them maintain a level of interoperability that will ensure the success of our combined efforts. We will continue to explore new concepts, share operational lessons, and assess the impact of new technologies on our methods. Through this active exchange of ideas and information, we can ensure that we and our allies are equipped with the proper tools and information needed for mission success.

Further, through our training and education processes, we will demonstrate the role of the MAGTF in the joint and combined operations environment. As part of this education, we must address the importance of trust in the joint context. Just as the elements of the MAGTF operate on the basis of a bond of trust, the various parts of a joint or combined force likewise rely upon one another for support. This idea is ingrained in our own Service culture, and I expect Marines to be leaders in demonstrating and explaining trust when operating within joint and combined environments.

MAGTFs can support joint experimentation programs. As unique, balanced, combined arms formations, MAGTFs are ideal for evaluating emerging joint doctrine, force structure, training methods, or equipment in an environment that is a microcosm of the joint operational context. Our rich history of innovation offers much in this regard, and we should seek opportunities to use the Marine Corps as the Defense Department's premier conceptual "test bed." Partnerships with industry can aid us in this effort. American business interests and the Department of Defense are currently exploring many initiatives with potential military applications. In many areas, the

rate of change is extremely rapid. By “partnering” with industry, we can capitalize on these initiatives and stay abreast of change.

We will play a key role in contributing to homeland defense. Defending American lives, property, and institutions at home is a principal task of government. There is a very real prospect that some adversaries will threaten our homeland with asymmetrical attacks. We must prepare, in concert with civil authorities, to respond to these domestic contingencies.

The Marine Corps Reserve, already “forward deployed” in hundreds of cities across America, should play a leading role in homeland defense by supporting civil-military responses to crises. Their ability to respond rapidly and to interact with civilian agencies will contribute immeasurably to our homeland defense. Accordingly, we should examine the feasibility of linking local units, consistent with their capabilities, to civil organizations. Individual reservists with specialized training can also augment both civil and military authorities.

The role of Reserve units in homeland defense will not detract from their primary mission of augmenting and reinforcing the regular component. The Marine Corps Reserve is an essential part of the Total Force Marine Corps both in peace and in war. Over 98 percent of all Selected Marine Corps Reserve units are included in current operational plans. In peacetime, the Reserves are also contributors to exercises, OPTEMPO relief, and actual operations. They will continue to fulfill this role, under the Total Force concept. Although I



view the Marine Corps Reserve as a complementary, rather than a totally mirrored force, I intend to resource it at levels similar to that of the regular component. In the current strategic environment, we should not do otherwise.

Connecting to Society

Secretary of Defense and Mrs. William Cohen have emphasized the value of strengthening the bonds between our military institutions and society. By working to make the Department of Defense more visible to “Main Street USA,” they have honored the contributions of American men and women who serve in the Armed Forces of the United States. We will support their admirable efforts by continuing to build upon their success through active participation with our Secretary of the Navy and those dedicated to this important effort.

The Marine Corps is inextricably linked to American society. We exist to protect the larger community which, in return, nurtures and sustains us. By maintaining a sound and healthy relationship with the society we serve, we will build confidence in our institution and support for our efforts. We do this for two reasons. First, it is the right thing to do. We are America’s Corps of Marines, and Americans want to understand who we are and what we are about. Second, it is good for Marines and for the Corps. The support of Americans is critical. Our Marines deserve to know how much the American people appreciate them.

Individual Marines have many personal connections to our society. They come from it, are transformed by their experience in our ranks, and ultimately return to it. During their time in uniform, Marines maintain their personal connections to society through their families and friends back home or through involvement with the local communities surrounding our bases and stations. These individual affiliations are invaluable to us, and we will encourage Marines to maintain them. When a Marine returns home on leave and visits his or her old neighborhood or school, Americans learn something about us while the Marine experiences, at a grassroots level, the sincere appreciation of the Nation. Similarly, when Marines volunteer to assist in community projects near bases, Americans are invariably impressed and encouraged by our enthusiasm, our high standards, and our desire to serve. We are doing great things for a great Nation, and our citizens deserve to feel as good about it as we do!

We will reinforce the personal efforts of our Marines in this area by developing our larger institutional connections to American society. There are

many community outreach programs to help us. For instance, we provide ceremonial support for parades and other public events, host "open house" activities to introduce citizens to our bases and our Marines, and even sponsor charitable programs, such as "Toys for Tots." These are rich opportunities to showcase our Marines and to inspire Americans with our patriotism.

Our most visible institutional link to society is the Marine Corps Reserve. All across America, in small outposts, Reserve Marines live and work among our fellow citizens. Because almost all of our Reserve units are located in areas where there is not a large active duty presence, many people base their impression of the Marine Corps on their contact with these Marines. When they are not training for war, Reserve Marines and their families interact with their neighbors in America's cities and towns, leaving a strong positive impression in the minds of Americans. Clearly, this is a critical link between the Corps and society. We must build upon it as a way of sharing with the community our human dimension.

We will nourish our connection to society by reaffirming our commitment to Marine veterans. As mentioned earlier, about 40,000 Marines per year return to civilian life at the end of their uniformed days in the Corps. These Marines continue to serve, in a sense, by carrying our message to their communities and demonstrating, through their words and deeds, Marine Corps dedication to American values. In their role as "citizen Marines," our veterans live by our credo, "*Once a Marine, always a Marine.*" Those of us who remain in uniform must uphold the integrity of those words by supporting our veterans as we do all other Marines. Because we appreciate their service and value their continuing dedication to country and Corps, we will ensure that we include them in appropriate activities and recognize their contributions as ambassadors of our way of life.

Many of our veterans participate actively in formal organizations chartered specifically to serve the needs of Marines. Some of these organizations are large and well known, while others are very small, but they all share a common bond of dedication to fellow Marines. These groups form a highly visible and very constructive link between the Marine Corps and society through their demonstration of love for their country and continuing devotion to our "Corps values." Additionally, through their interaction with society, these Marine organizations—such as the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation, the Marine Corps Association, the Marine Corps League, and the many others—promote a positive image of the Corps that helps us stay connected to American society. These organizations are a major source of strength for the Corps. We will support and sustain their efforts and continue to include them as highly valued members of the Marine Corps family.

As Marines, we are indeed privileged. We share a proud history of service to the Nation and a common belief in the authority of our core values. As we step forward, faithful to our heritage, but with an eye on the future, we will continue to provide the Nation a Corps of Marines, secure in our place among the world's finest fighting organizations and among the most cherished of our national institutions.

At the end of the day, what we will all remember the most is that *we enjoy being Marines*. Although ours is a demanding profession, it is also extraordinarily rewarding and fulfilling. We take pride in overcoming adversity, and we treasure the camaraderie that binds us to our fellow Marines. These are the forces that drew us to the Corps, and we spend our time in uniform drawing satisfaction from them. Simply put, *being a Marine is fun*. My wife, Diane, and I, along with Sergeant Major McMichael and his wife, Rita, look forward to serving with you and sharing the satisfaction and challenge that are part of life in the Corps.

A promising future lies ahead and I am confident that we are prepared for it, because we define ourselves by balanced excellence in the way we train, live, and, if need be, fight—as United States Marines. Continue to encourage thinking and initiative. Emphasize the primacy of the Marine and his rifle. Finally, be inspired by the powerful sense of purpose and belonging implicit in the words, "For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack."

Semper Fidelis,
James L. Jones

